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Advancement of women

Human rights questions

Letter dated 10 July 1999 from the Permanent Representative of Chile to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to inform you that the House of Representatives of Chile, on 18 May 1999, unanimously adopted a resolution on the situation of women in Afghanistan. Accordingly, I attach herewith a copy of the resolution, which includes a strong protest against the inhuman and degrading treatment of women in that country, and also calls on the United Nations to intercede for the life, dignity, rights and freedoms of women in Afghanistan (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda items 103 and 110.

(*Signed*) Juan **Larrain**
Permanent Representative

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Annex

Resolution adopted by the House of Representatives of Chile on 18 May 1999

Valparaiso, 18 May 1999

Resolution No. 228

To H.E. the President of the Republic:

The House of Representatives, at its 66th meeting, held today, has adopted the following resolution:

"Whereas:

In 1996, the fundamentalist group known as the Taliban took power in Afghanistan,

From that time onwards, women have been confined to their homes, required to wear clothing that covers them completely, are not allowed to exercise any occupation or to appear in public unless accompanied by a male family member,

Afghan women are not permitted to be seen from the street, and to this end the Government has ordered the window panes of homes to be painted; women must walk silently and keep even their eyes covered by a veil to prevent them from being seen,

Since they are prohibited from working, women who have no husbands or male family members are dying of hunger or begging in the streets, including some, such as lawyers, doctors, artists and writers, who have doctorates or other professional qualifications,

Afghan women live in fear for their lives, for they may be beaten to death for the slightest inappropriate conduct or for merely leaving a part of their body uncovered; for example, a woman was recently stoned to death by fundamentalists for leaving one of her arms exposed while driving a motor vehicle,

Under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, all persons have the right to a tolerable human existence, including women in a Muslim country with whose culture one may be unfamiliar. Until 1996, Afghan women, as Muslims, enjoyed relative freedom of dress; they were able to work, drive and appear alone in public. Consequently, Taliban fundamentalism is not part of their tradition or culture, but is alien to them and is even regarded as extreme in those cultures where Islamic fundamentalism is the norm,

The United Nations has recently intervened in ethnic conflicts to prevent genocide, barbarism and systematic violations of human rights, and hence it can certainly express its rejection of the oppression, murder and injustices being committed by the Taliban against Afghan women,

The House of Representatives has agreed as follows:

To request you, if you deem it appropriate, to express to the Government of Afghanistan, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, your protest against the inhuman and degrading treatment which the Government is meting out to women in that country;

To request also that, through the same Ministry, you submit a formal appeal to the United Nations to intercede for the life, dignity and rights and freedoms of women in Afghanistan."

I have the honour to draw your attention to the above.

May God be with you.

(*Signed*) Carlos **Montes Cisternas**
President of the House of Representatives

(*Signed*) Alfonso **Zuñiga Opazo**
Deputy Secretary of the House of Representatives